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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN'S MATURING
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

REF: A. KABUL 501
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SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Afghanistan's long-moribund Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) has shown new vitality over the last three months by first reorganizing itself, and then by choreographing GIROA's interagency response to the threat posed by Ammonium Nitrate-based explosives (reftel A). Under the direction of a charismatic Deputy National Security Advisor, ONSC is asserting a role on a range of issues, including insurgent reintegration and drafting the National Threat Assessment. These signs of life, coupled with U.K. and U.S. advocacy, have sparked international interest in support for the ONSC. Embassy Kabul and ISAF will need to manage this support carefully to ensure that it meets NSC's needs for basic technical and staff support at the organization's lower levels, while avoiding the sort of heavy-handed mentoring that can retard organizational development. END SUMMARY

SECRET OF ONSC'S SUCCESS:
FINDING AND EXPLOITING BUREAUCRATIC NICHES

[1](#)3. (SBU) ONSC had traditionally been hampered by ministries' turf consciousness, poor leadership, and Presidential disinterest. Second Deputy National Security Advisor Shaida Mohammad Abdali, a 2008 graduate of the National Defense University, has led the fight to make ONSC a more effective institution along American lines. ONSC now uses a working-level &Security Operations Group8 (SOG) to tee up issues for a Deputies Committee (DC), which in turn makes decision recommendations for a ministerial-level Principals, Group. The SOG and DC include international observers, while the Principals, Group is entirely Afghan) thus, internationals are consulted while decision-making remains in Afghan hands. ONSC has identified and taken on issues that fall outside traditional ministerial lines, and leveraged them to create a role for itself:

-- The issue of Ammonium Nitrate based explosives, for example, crossed bureaucratic lines between several ministries. Therefore, early ISAF and U.S. Embassy attempts to encourage a single ministry to take the lead encountered difficulties. ONSC leadership, backed by international support, sensitized President Karzai to the threat posed by AN explosives, and drafted a ban the President signed (reftel A).

-- The ONSC convened a Ministerial meeting on February 14 to begin drafting GIROA,s implementation plan on insurgent reintegration. ONSC is well positioned to lead the Afghan interagency on an issue involving overlapping security, governance, and development equities.

-- When ONSC drafted the National Threat Assessment, it included ISAF, NTM-A, UNAMA, and the U.S. and U.K embassies in the process. Internationals provided helpful comments to the SOG and DC (inter alia, toning down anti-Pakistan/anti-ISI language) but otherwise stayed on the sidelines as Afghans managed the process.

-- ONSC is now tackling a trickier bureaucratic issue) the destruction of obsolete ammunition. Afghan views differ, with some major players (including the Ministry of Defense) adamantly opposed to ammo destruction. In this test case, ONSC will have to forge a bureaucratic consensus where none exists, and deal with a recalcitrant ministry that "owns" the issue in question.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND INTEREST GROW

¶4. (SBU) These successes have prompted ISAF headquarters elements and NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) to contemplate support for ONSC, building on earlier efforts by the U.K Embassy and the Combined Security Transition Command, Afghanistan (CSTC-A). The UK Embassy was an early advocate of greater donor support for the ONSC. In summer 2009, it proposed a project to assist the office in drafting Afghanistan's first National Security Strategy -- a capstone strategic planning document that will organize the efforts of Afghanistan,s security services. The UK project will spend 500,000 pounds over six months to provide senior ONSC officials with advising by UK-based security experts.

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¶5. (SBU) CSTC-A had supported the ONSC with four contract advisors since 2004. However, in 2009 CSTC-A began to withdraw its support for the ONSC, reducing and eventually eliminating its mentoring program. U.S. Forces Afghanistan,s Liaison Office to the U.S. Embassy (L/EMB), which managed this program on behalf of CSTC-A, advocated for continued support to ONSC, and led an ad hoc working group on ONSC support with representatives from ISAF, CSTC-A, the U.S. and U.K embassies. Along with ONSC,s success in banning Ammonium Nitrate, the ad-hoc group catalyzed ISAF and U.S. Embassy interest in support for ONSC.

¶6. (SBU) NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A), CSTC-A,s successor organization, has taken a proactive approach to supporting the ONSC. NTM-A is in the final stages of approving a \$12 million National Security Command and Control Center for President Karzai, to be administered by ONSC and staffed by personnel from the Ministries of Defense and Interior and the National Directorate of Security. The facility will provide President Karzai with real-time information on all Afghan security operations and crises (including natural disasters), better enabling him to fulfill his role as Commander-in-Chief. Partners are also considering additional support:

-- NTM-A has assigned a military officer (LTC O-5) to support the ONSC and contemplates placing as many as 10 civilian contract advisors within the ONSC to provide a variety of technical assistance to staff.

-- ISAF has created an O-6 (Colonel) billet for an ONSC advisor; this position will be staffed by a subsequent NATO "Flags to Post" exercise.

-- NATO's office of the Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) is considering a more active role in support to ONSC. Though their efforts are undefined at present, the SCR office could well become the locus for ISAF support to ONSC and could draw

on Afghanistan Cooperation Program (ACP) funds to support their effort.

-- The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Policy (OSD(P)) may provide one or two civilian advisors to ONSC through its Pakistan-Afghanistan Rotation Cell (PARC), which plans to deploy a dozen OSD(P) civilians to Pakistan and Afghanistan later this year.

-- Embassy Kabul has requested the creation of an FS-01 or Senior Foreign Service position to advise the ONSC. The position will be filled by a candidate with extensive prior NSC experience.

-- USAID is seeking continued authority to support the Office of the President with salary subsidies, workforce and systems development, and technical assistance for officials working within the ONSC (ref B). This support has enabled ONSC to build and maintain a competent and experienced staff.

REMAINING WEAKNESSES

17. (SBU) The success of ONSC is still personality dependent. Aside from Abdali -- and two or three key senior officials who were likewise trained in the U.S. and share his vision of a robust, American-style interagency -- this vision has no advocates within the Afghan bureaucracy. One objective of the UK's advising project is to brainstorm options on ONSC with a variety of Afghans, building interest and support within the government for the idea of a more effective interagency coordination mechanism.

WAY FORWARD

18. (SBU) On February 3, the Embassy and ISAF agreed to formalize the ad hoc group's function of organizing support for the ONSC. We agreed to:

-- Designate the Pol-Mil Counselor as the lead USG-point of contact for relations with the ONSC on policy oversight and administrative support to the ONSC.

-- Augment Pol-Mil by requesting additional expertise as necessary for supporting the ONSC.

-- USAID's Office of Democracy and Governance continuing to support the ONSC's capacity building.

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We will also use the Embassy/ISAF national-level working group on Population Security (PSWG) to coordinate donor support to the ONSC, as the group already includes all of the key actors on ONSC support -- ISAF, the U.K. and U.S. Embassies, and NTM-A.
Eikenberry